

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 11, 2014

Meeting No.:197

Project: 300 E. Pratt Street

Phase: Schematic

Location: Inner Harbor

PRESENTATION:

Michael Nicolaus, Senior Vice President and Greg Luongo, Vice President of HKS Architects outlined the design parameters for a mixed-use high rise project by developer Comstock Partners on the last remaining undeveloped property of the original Inner Harbor plan as follows:

1. Program – 400+/- residential units with amenities; 200+/- hotel rooms with amenities; 500-600+/- above grade parking spaces; 10,000-20,000 s.f. retail space; approximately 38-42 floors high.
2. Context & Analysis – filling existing development void; prime location with views in all directions; comparatively narrow frontage on Pratt St.
3. Design Goals:
 - Celebrate the project’s unique **Location**
 - Respect the **History and Legacy** of the Inner Harbor
 - Be a building of the **21st Century**
 - Embrace **Sustainability and Building Performance**
4. Design Drivers – (a.) Typical plans; (b.) Zoning envelope; (c.) Ground Plane space allocation; (d.) Flood Plane implications as described by civil engineer John d’Epagnier ;
5. Conceptual Design Massing Exploration Options– three primary massing explorations shared:
 - Courtyard Scheme - courtyard open toward west on stepped base
 - Point Tower Scheme - single point tower centered on stepped base
 - Bar Scheme – long bar oriented north-south, short side on Pratt, on stepped base
6. Alternate “Bar Scheme” placements on site and Leading Option description– Design Team indicated preference for bar alignment toward east side of site with stacked massing identity for each of the various program elements.

Comments from the Panel:

The Panel expressed its great anticipation and excitement regarding the “landmark” potential for this site as the last remaining undeveloped parcel of the original Inner Harbor master plan. It also expressed its appreciation of the design team’s early sharing of comparative studies regarding promising massing approaches. Although it agreed with many practical aspects of the design logic and conclusions, there were several critical challenges voiced which deserve further study before moving beyond the conceptual/schematic phase. Those concerns were as follows:

1. **The importance of Inner Harbor Views** – Although The Panel was pleased with seeing alternative massing schemes, several comments suggested that the primacy of Inner harbor views received insufficient importance in both the hotel and the residential buildings in the preferred option. In that regard, the direct expression of the parking floors toward the Pratt Street frontage was severely challenged with suggestions that this face should be flanked with “rooms with views”. It was suggested strongly that a “two tower or two slab scheme” (one favoring Pratt Street for the hotel with a higher residential tower addressing Lombard Street and overlooking the lower hotel) should be explored. Additionally, the “wedding cake” layering was challenged and opportunities to express portions of the building to meet grade were encouraged.

2. **The Buildings expression on Lombard Street** – The Panel felt that, from an Urban Design perspective, the Lombard Street face of the building could greatly improve the nature of the existing Lombard Street experience. By no means should the Lombard face be viewed as a service “wall” with little street activity or street life.
3. **The Flood Plain implications and the Pratt Street pedestrian relationship** – With a potential +/-6-8 foot height differential between the sidewalk and the first occupied floor, in response to the new flood plain regulations, there was considerable concern about the viability and access to potential retail tenants as well as the creation of an intimate entrance relationship with the street. Although engineered solutions may help solve this challenge, the early inclusion of a talented landscape architect is encouraged.
4. **The strength of a big idea - Inspired Design Philosophy and Expression** - The Panel encouraged the development of design narratives that seek more inspired philosophies and solutions in addressing this unique and strategic site and its landmark potential. Similarly, narratives which address landscape, sustainability and building performance would be useful.

Panel Action: Recommend continued schematic development in response to above comments.

Attending:

Michael Nicolaus, Greg Luongo, Henry Hill, Herb Blain - HKS Architects
John d’Epagnier– RKK
Caroline Hecker, Justin Williams – RMG
Larry Bergner, Maggie Parker, Phil London, John Camera – Comstock
Mackenzie Paull – Downtown Partnership

Dr. Meany; Messrs. Bowden*, Burns and Rubin - UDARP Panel
Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon –Planning Dept